

THE SUPREME COURT  
OF ONTARIO.

(Hon: Mr Justice Riddell)



OSGOODE HALL,  
TORONTO.

June 11th 1921

Mrs Emma Scott Nasmith,

The Margaret School of Literature and Expression

North Street

Toronto

My Dear Mrs Nasmith,

I was exceedingly sorry that you were not able to be with us last evening and more sorry for the reason. I hope that a little rest will make you <sup>7</sup>alright again.

I may say that I had a little turn myself ;when the doctor came in Thursday morning he told me that I might attend one and only one of the five functions which I was billed to speak at yesterday and I chose yours.

I am sending a copy of my manuscript so that you may see what I said to your dear girls.

Thanking you for a very delightful evening and with kindest regards,

I am

Yours very truly

*William Rensick Riddell*



Address

to the

GRADUATING CLASS

The Margaret Eaton School of Literature & Expression

Toronto - Friday, June 10, 1921.

by

The Honourable William Renwick Riddell, LL D, F. R. S. C. ,etc

Justice of the Supreme Court of Ontario.

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I may not say to you " Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking" since for more years than a less fortunate and happy man might care to recall, I have been speaking more or less frequently to many sorts and conditions of public audiences. I may not even say " Unaccustomed as I am to addressing graduating classes " for I have been signally honoured by being asked to address graduating classes in many universities and other schools of learning in Canada and the United States. I may, however, with accuracy say that I am unaccustomed to speak to graduates of



a School of Expression - and in my inexperience I throw myself wholly on your mercy, pleading only an earnest desire to interest and in interesting, if even only a little to help you.

I am not sure that I should have ventured to accept your principal's flattering invitation had the Laureate's prophetic vision of the coming girl graduate <sup>had full</sup> come to fruition. He saw in the future " Prudes for proctors, dowagers for deans And sweet girl graduates with their golden hair".

That mawkish Early Victorian conception of the educated girl as distinguished particularly by her coiffure suited the times, which had not outgrown the view that a woman should be an ornament, not an individuality, an ivy clinging to the oak, not a human being, able and will to take her fair share of the world's work, ~~as~~ a citizen with the rights and duties of a citizen of a free state, afraid neither to demand her own, nor



to undertake the corresponding duties.

Strong, capable women of the kind I know - I have lived with them all my life - their hair has perhaps been a matter of care and attention, it has indeed seemed to me to be always a glory, but that is not their prominent characteristic - Women of this kind I know and can speak to frankly and freely, as one God-made soul to another - I have no message to her of the hair. I may not seem to you a compliment or even an appreciation, but it is sincerely meant as such when I say that I shall address you not very differently from an address to young men.

Your college studies have been of literature and expression, joining to these the physical culture which is necessary for the full knowledge and enjoyment of either, being as well a good thing in itself - your aim has been, and is the good and beautiful in body, in mind, in soul.

We have got far away from the old and vicious idea



implied if not expressed that God made the mind and soul but that the body is the devil's work, to be despised, subdued neglected. Socrates " Whom well inspired the oracle pronounced

Wisest of men", knew the truth. In Charmides, the most delightful of Plato's Dialogues - can I persuade you to read Plato ? - the wise man told the beautiful boy " Physicians of eminence say they cannot cure the eye withour curing the head, the head without curing the whole body " - a truth we are just beginning to understand for we now know that a headache always means something more. But Socrates went further - " You cannot cure the body without curing the soul " An exaggeration of course, but containing a profound truth - the soul and the body alike the work of God are so interrelated<sup>a</sup>, they so act and react upon each other that what injures one must of necessity injure the other, and what keeps the one well will in most cases help the other.

The time has gone by never to return in which the ideal woman lolling on heaped up cushions like an odalisque, fed



a flabby body with sweetmeats and fainted at the sight of a spider. The fresh cool air of common sense has blown away many of the cobwebs of an outworn aesthetic.

We hear, indeed, now as always the wail of those immersed in the past of the decadence of the modern woman - ideals change with the times - and all cannot keep up, all do nor wish to keep up.

In my boyhood I saw the hoopskirts evolving from the came to the steel crinoline, the widespreading skirt, so far encompassing that it was all one seat in a buggy could comfortably hold when my mother entered like a balloon - and never was there a sight more beautiful! I have seen the Grecian bend draped with perfect ~~taste~~ taste, and perfectly beautiful - the long and trailing skirt, ~~unhygienic~~ unhygienic but charming, the highneck the tight sleeve, the leg of mutton sleeve, close drapery and loose, flounce, pannier, and a score of things of which I do not even know the name - but I never yet saw a woman's dress



which was not beautiful, nor did I ever see one which did not receive the censure of some critic. Woman's dress to-day surpasses everything of the past in grace and charm; and I am told in ease and comfort. Extremes there are as there always have been, and they are to be avoided - because it is no longer immodest ( if not quite a sin ) to show the ankle, it does not follow that one must expose the knee, because it is graceful and beautiful to drape the neck loosely there is no need to lay bare the whole chest. But the short skirt, the loose waist, the free neck, all make for health, as they make for beauty and grace.

It may seem at least odd that <sup>a man</sup> ~~aman~~ - I had almost said " a mere man " - should speak of dress at all. But one must be clothed, and it is of importance that clothes should be such as will not militate against health and usefulness - and I wish you to hear the testimony of one man at least that the clothes that you in common with most Canadian women wear are as graceful and becoming as they are healthful and comfortable.



And this is not a digression - all that makes for health of the body is to be commended and the use of healthful dress is not to be discouraged because some hypercritic conceives it to be ungraceful and no voice is raised in defence,

It is I take it not the least of your missions to preach the doctrine of health and beauty - and to live it. Dress is not the least important field for your mission.

The healthy body should naturally be graceful - the phrase over the portal of the School " ~~TO~~ KALOKAGATHON " is translated " the beautiful and good " - but it connotes much more, it implies gracefulness and perfect functioning - a horse was kalokagathos when it was graceful and capable of doing what a horse should - a man was kalokagathos when he was not only good to look at and listen to but conscious of his duty and did it well - the body is kalokagathos when it is not only graceful but works right, fulfils the functions for which it was created. In our climate and with our ideas it is impossible that the



Man form divine shall be undraped - it is a matter of moment that the drapery shall not only be delightful to the eye but that it shall not impede the usefulness of the body.

You have been taught the value of expression and you are to teach it. Man differs somewhat from the lower animals in the expression of emotion, but wholly in that he has thoughts, conclusions, judgments, of not only simple, but complex character which he must needs communicate to his kind, and he must, therefore have more extensive and more refined means of expression.

The object of expression is to move, to instruct, to persuade. You will sometimes hear - I often hear - it said "The age of rhetoric is gone". Nothing can be more false - the day of idle declamation, windy and wordy volubility, may be gone - the demagogue with nothing but vituperation, and venomous personalities may find his occupation gone or at least discredited, but the effect of well-chosen and well arranged words, of sound and accurate argument was never greater than now. Taking an example from my own



profession, the lawyer who waves his arms, and vehemently shouts empty garrulence to the <sup>u</sup>jury is discounted and Judges have little patience with vapid and empty "eloquence", but real rhetoric is more valuable than ever. And the graceful gesture still helps out the forceful word ; the " beautiful thought and softly bodied forth" has not lost any of its tremendous power.

All this you have learned, and are to teach - but there is something more - " above the vulgar height of common souls " you may be, I trust you are - but the common souls remain and they are the most of our common humanity. We cannot sever ~~ourselves~~ ourselves - all of us - from our people. We owe a duty to our people. If to us is given

" The light that never was on sea or land  
The consecration and the poet's dream"

we cannot keep it from others.

" A man's best things are nearest him  
Lie close about his feet"



find much of our real life and work in everyday life and with everyday people.

" There are hermits souls who <sup>live</sup> withdrawn  
In the place of their self content  
There are souls like stars who dwell apart  
In <sup>a</sup> fellowless firmament" - and some of these are <sup>the</sup>  
very elect. But in

"Athens, the eye of Greece, mother of Arts  
and eloquence"

the greatest and the wisest served their people. " The olive <sup>grows</sup> ~~grows~~  
of Acadi<sup>ene</sup> ~~ene~~

Plato's retirement where the Attic bird

Trilled her thick warbled note the Summer long" did  
not harbour the recluse and the mis<sup>anthrope</sup> ~~anthrope~~: Socrates was amongst  
the common people every hour, and taught as they would hear.

Even in our own day the whole conception of woman's  
place has been evolutionised. I remember when less than fifty



years ago a Adeline Shenick asked to be permitted to take a degree from Victoria University. How the little world of our town shuddered with horror - a woman take a university degree! how unladylike, how unwomanly, nay <sup>how</sup> unchristian !! Now it is a commonplace that if a young woman wishes a<sup>u</sup>niversity education she has the same right to it as her brother.

<sup>Some</sup> Not ~~en~~ years ago~~m~~ visiting an American University, in the home of the reverend Sec~~(~~etary, I found a beautiful, gracious, talented and <sup>e</sup>well educated woman who could see nothing <sup>right</sup> ~~vital~~ in woman suffrage, and said she would fight to the death against it - last year she voted. In our ~~pleasant, safe, life, and~~ own country women have been given the vote as of course - and almost without their knowledge - certainly there was no such agitation~~n~~ over the franchise as in England and the United States. Women are now citizens with all the rights of a citizen - they must not shirk the duties of citizenship.

It is to be supposed that to many, most of you of this



graduating class will fall the lot of women since our great ancestress Eve, to be the wife and mother - some perhaps may remain "bachelor girls" ( who differ from "old maids" in that they are unmarried because they will and "old maids" because others won't ) - but whatever your lot you cannot be indifferent to your Country, your Province, your City.

During the war, women gave up ease, peace, pleasure, some life itself, that they might help to save our civilization - to keep Canada free - now in peace woman cannot refuse to give up ease, comfort pleasure, to make and keep Canada pure, great, a land to be desired, a land worthy of its past, clean physically,

( Disease, preventable disease, is stalking boldly in the midst of us, a ghastly spectre full of menace to our land, what are you going to do to stay its progress ?

The muddy waters of superstition, of prejudice, founded in ignorance, degrading to our intelligence are ~~formed~~ found too often where should flow the clear pellucid waters of



enlightened science, what are you going to do to try to dry or stem the flood ?

The impure book, the novel, the picture, masquerading as art, but with the Satyr's leer, is always with us. No one indeed can wish for " Art made tongue-tied by authority " - such cannot enjoy " ~~the~~ vision beatific " - but are you not bound to strive that art do not

" Press beyond her bounds and be

Procures to the Lords of Hell " ?

The "primrose path of dalliance " must be retraced on peril of the loss of all that is worth having .

Of politics I say nothing of a partizan tinge. As free citizens of a free country it is your duty to keep or to make our public life, national, provincial, municipal, pure, honourable, and righteous - to support all the efforts to be made for that purpose, and in that view to know what is being done, and how and why, in Dominion, in ~~Province~~ Province and in City.



Every country, every municipality, has ~~its~~ the government it deserves. Someone must be at the helm of state, at the head of affairs, and it is the plain duty of all patriotic citizens, women as well as men, to see to it that the right man is there.

And it must not be old party cries, prejudices of the olden time, begotten of outworn hatreds and illwill, it must be the clear call of duty, the cold light of reason, the heartfelt sense of right which are to govern you. Life is not all a Summer day, and great things are not wrought in flippancy:-

" The hand that ~~h~~ounded Peter's dome  
And groined the arch of Christian Rome  
Wrought in a sad sincerity,  
Himself from God he could not free" and  
" He builded better than he knew.

A country is just what its people make it, and that people remember its duty which remember that when ~~at it~~ all is said



and done it is righteousness which exalteth a nation - and <sup>which</sup> ~~that~~ with full knowledge and in sad sincerity, selects, watches, and directs those who are to guide its destinies.

What part will you take in the supreme duty of citizenship ?





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